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Mein Recht auf Leben. Von DR. HEINRICH SPITTA, a. o. Professor of Philosophy in the University of Tübingen. Tübingen, J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1900.—pp. xi, 468.

This work falls within the class of books (and their number is evidently on the increase in Germany), whose avowed purpose is the discovery of an adequate philosophy of life as a whole—a *Lebensanschauung* or *Weltanschauung* that seems to afford at least a partial explanation of many of the anomalies of human existence, and a satisfactory theory of the relation of human life to the physical universe. It disclaims any intention to give metaphysic in the narrower sense of the word; and the reader to whom it primarily appeals is not so much the professional student of philosophy as the general seeker after truth, or the serious-minded person who can hardly find an adequate basis for noble living, either in science or in the current (and traditional) metaphysical monism. One of the best things that can be said about it from the standpoint of philosophy, is perhaps the fact that it is of value in affording us an insight into many of the intellectual and moral tendencies of our time. It also falls in line with a philosophical tendency of the present that has the merit if no other, of extricating metaphysic from the closed circle of an all-sufficient dialectic—the tendency to discuss fruitful hypotheses. Even in spite of the two chief drawbacks that will doubtless militate against it, viz., (1) its having the intrepidity to discuss an hypothesis that to many minds is but a species of animism or primitive mythology, viz., Reincarnation (and the Pre-existence of the soul), and (2) the extreme discursiveness of its style, it is a book that is full of suggestion and that ought to afford new conceptions of duty, both to the plain man and the philosopher. *Wer vieles bringt wird manchen etwas bringen*, and Professor Spitta has certainly brought together a multiplicity of interesting practical questions, that ought all to be included in the scope and the unity of a true philosophical attitude to life.

Some of the phenomena in the life of to-day that seem to Professor Spitta to be most reprehensible from the philosophical standpoint are the general level of mediocrity in the intellectual realm, the disgust at, or the indifference towards social conditions that we find on the part of different people, the fact that philosophers have (in his eyes) forgotten that philosophy is not merely an intellectual matter, but something of the nature of a mission (to make men conscious of the spiritual meaning of life as such), the general state of nervous tension in which the daily struggle of life is conducted by many people with little explicit thought of anything beyond the mere struggle itself, the rough-

and-ready acceptance of the doctrine that might is right, the apparent opposition between the natural sciences with their statements of 'fact,' and the moral sciences with their statements of 'value' and their judgments upon mere matters of history, and above all things the unsatisfactoriness of the present state of psychology. By the latter he means that the 'statistical mania,' or the craze for measurement in the terms of quantity, has left out, or is leaving out of mental science all that is distinctively spiritual, or that the mental states that are examined by psychology are only those that stand in most immediate connection with bodily conditions, and that the disagreement of specialists as to any one science of mental phenomena has gone so far that criminologists, pathologists, sociologists, jurists, students of comparative religion, are all feeling obliged to construct their own psychology. We may certainly agree that there does seem reason for believing that there will be in the future, as there has been in the past, a place for the philosophical psychologist, for the psychologist who will put together for us in some coherent system all the actual facts that different investigators seem to regard as essential to the soul of man—a thing that we are not likely to get for some time, owing to the present contempt for metaphysic that exists in many quarters, and to the fact that metaphysical monism seems to have reduced the soul to merely a mode of infinite substance, or the reflex of some ultimate attribute of reality. In spite of the generalizations of science, and also of the philosophy of nature, Professor Spitta contends, we cannot be said either to control nature or to completely understand her; we know neither how to conquer her nor how to avoid her.

The one thing that can save us from all this intellectual confusion, and the consequent attitude of indifference to the events of life, or the consequent absence of a true ethical temper, is a renewed belief in *personality*, in the reality of man as a being in and for himself with the inalienable right of this self-existence, in the reality of man's life as something more than a link in an endless chain of phenomenal causes and effects, or than a mere reflex of infinite thought or infinite will. Man must *be* something before he can be studied as the object of philosophy. Man's personality cannot, as it were, be looked upon merely in the light of contemporary sociology as the outcome of environment and heredity, nor can man's freedom be merely his power to think or reflect upon a universe of tendencies and aptitudes that are merely 'given' to him, or made for him and not by him. Man as he is must be clearly seen to be his own work, and his life to be a problem that he has, in consequence of his moral success or his moral failure, set for himself.

This brings us to the central line of consideration of the book, which is the search for an axiom or postulate which makes the imperative of duty a grounded and intelligible reality. "A reasonable ethical belief is something quite different from a scientific metaphysic." Beneath the conception of duty the author finds the conception of the *right to live*: "I have the duty to live only in so far as I have the *right* to live. The Ego is not merely a mirror in which the world reflects itself; it is a center of force from which the mere concept of life gets reality and significance." There is a personal or spiritual realm in which all ordinary, all earthly values are *transformed*, and in which man's life is determined by something that is above it—by a new life that transforms the rational life. "I believe in this new life because I believe in the moral and social task; I must, therefore, live until I have rendered the moral ideal." In other words, I am eternal; I shall be born again after my death into a new body, a new earthly life; my soul will receive a new earthly body which it will be my duty to control until it is reduced to the elements of which it is composed, and again my soul shall receive a new body until at last everything in the nature of my duty is accomplished. My soul is the eternal, the spiritual, the eternal *in time*, that is not of this world and that cannot (its doing so would be contrary to elemental right and justice) go to pieces in the world. I believe in my duty until I have fulfilled it. I believe in God until I have attained to him and entered into His kingdom. Even if I must come back to earth a thousand times, that is a matter of small consequence. . . . "I have an eternity behind me and before me. . . . I work out of an infinite fullness. With the right hand I work without ceasing, and with the left I hold fast to God who helps me. When I shall be in God and God in me then will God's kingdom be; and we are members of that kingdom."

I have reproduced the words and the manner of Professor Spitta, not merely to give definiteness to his contention, but to illustrate his method of arriving at his central position. What he gives us is an hypothetical and phenomenological presentation of the philosophy of Reincarnation, on the distinct presupposition of the principle that the philosophy that gives the truest account of personality and of the moral life is the true philosophy. A similar presupposition of Professor Spitta's is that the truth of a religious hypothesis can be tested only by living it: I hold this belief not because it is true; it is true because I hold it and live upon it. He is also extremely careful to state that he puts forward the hypothesis of Reincarnation as his own personal choice—as for him a vital personal hypothesis. The portions of

his book wherein he expounds Reincarnation in this spirit undoubtedly read like a personal confession of faith. In saying this, however, we must remember that he regards it as the personal duty of the philosopher of to-day to come forward, irrespective of the criticism it may entail, with the courage of a belief in personality as a *res æterna*, and also with the courage of expressed personal dissatisfaction with both scientific and metaphysical monism.

The defect of the book is that Professor Spitta does not offer us a philosophy of the fact that personality is implied in the very constitution and nature of reality, unless it be considered perfectly competent for a philosopher to set out with the consciousness of the moral law as an ultimate and immediate fact. If it is possible to do so, then it is doubtless true with him as it is with Fichte that philosophy begins in a free act. (It is Professor Spitta's highest hope for his work that it may accomplish in its spirit and its substance something comparable to the effect of Fichte's *Address to the German People*, or of Schleiermacher's *Dialogues upon Religion*.) But what has he to say to the fact of Nature and her apparent indifference to our personal moral conceptions and ideals? What he lacks, in other words, in order to be convincing to the average reader, is a spiritual philosophy of nature. This Fichte, to be sure, found ready-made in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, but Professor Spitta evidently does not find very much to accept in contemporary idealistic philosophy. In this very connection, the wisdom of dwelling so much, in a semi-popular book, upon the unsatisfactoriness of contemporary science and philosophy without at the same time indicating its substantial service in reducing nature to *law*, and to the categories of *end* and purpose and *organism* and the *internal* (v. *external*) *connexion* that exists and must exist among different beings (I am thinking of Lotze), seems to be perhaps questionable. If there is one thing that the common man needs, it is a faith in the continuity and harmony of all specialized knowledge, and of all attempts at philosophical generalization or criticism and construction.

Of course Professor Spitta has a strong faith in God—a faith strong enough to 'overcome' the world and its apparent indifference to us. God is to him at least personal as the stay and support of the moral order of the world. Fichte's identification of God and the moral order of the world is to him both metaphorical and illogical—how can an order be a person? Moral order without God is indeed impossible, but then God must be substantial as the immanent cause of the world of things and persons; things express Him under the attribute of extension and persons under the attribute of thought. This step from

Nature to God, or from man's free personality to God is however also apt to seem unintelligible, unless we are willing to accept the underlying pragmatic or phenomenological philosophy of the author. This seems to repose on the contention, which is not altogether unintelligible, and is quite susceptible of direct proof or disproof, that the practical philosophy of both the average man and the philosopher reveals on their part a practical consciousness or recognition of the existence and working of God—a consciousness whose closer determination would fall as a task to metaphysic in the strict sense.

Professor Spitta's Theism again, will naturally encounter criticism on the ground of the imperfect philosophy (whether Creationism or Emanation or what not) with which it is associated. If the spirit of each human being is to work out its own destiny through endless reincarnations, what is the use of believing (as he does) in the help of God or of Christ (for Christ is God, he says, to those who need His help) throughout the whole process of living? And if the whole universe be an expression of God's free energizing, how can it be said that each man's body, and each man's character, and each man's environment, may be regarded as his own work or his own selection? Doubtless we know that there are difficulties for any philosophy of human freedom, and that some men like Henry More, the Cambridge Platonist, combined a belief in reincarnation with a form of theism and creationism, while others like Plato seem simply to believe in the soul's eternity. Professor Spitta's theodicy, too, suffers from the fact that he seems to talk more about reincarnation than preëxistence. That is, he does not make so much of the concept of justice as is generally made by believers in the preëxistence of the soul, through their association of present suffering and imperfections with preceding sin or imperfection. He cannot, in consequence of this very fact, do justice to the pessimistic aspects of Buddhism, or to the solution of problems of evil offered by Christianity. Enough has, perhaps, however, been said to show that this book attempts to deal with many problems that are not generally faced in metaphysical treatises of the ordinary kind, or in sociological works which too often wrongly presuppose that the individual is quite willing to sink himself and all his unsolved moral problems in devotion to an imaginary humanity of the future—which Professor Spitta rightly contends, as does Lotze, to be an abstraction.

W. CALDWELL.

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY.